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NOTE ON THE STATISTICS OF CRIME.

As it may be expected that the results of the Eleventh Census will show a large increase in the amount of crime, the means of studying the facts assume a great deal of importance; it seems proper, therefore, to direct the attention of the Statistical Association to some efforts on foot for obtaining better statistics.

During the last session of Congress a bill was favorably reported by the committee of both Houses for the establishment of a Prison Bureau in connection with the national government. Such a bureau would be similar in its scope to the Bureaus of Labor and Education. One of its chief duties would be the collection of statistics. Its organs would reach into the courts and count the persons accused and convicted of crime, and they would go into the prisons and count the persons serving out their sentences. Its prime object would be the collection of facts. If established, there can be no doubt that we would be able to approach the study of the delinquent classes with greater intelligence and larger prospect of solving at least a few elementary problems. It is to be hoped that the active efforts of Mr. E. C. Foster, general agent of the Department of Justice, the father of the bill, will be successful in securing its passage.

The prison wardens of the United States have an organization of their own for the consideration of practical topics of prison management and for securing uniformity of action along certain lines of policy. The subject of statistics is one of those which they have considered at several meetings. At the request of the secretary of that organization it was the privilege of the writer to present the subject at their recent meeting in Cincinnati in connection with the National Prison Association. A plan of operations was submitted whereby it was believed that accurate statistics of penitentiaries could be collected annually at trifling expense and labor and with excellent results. The plan proposed was that each state institution for adult offenders should fill out blanks for the personal characteristics of each prisoner received during the calendar year, and send these blanks to the secretary of the organization for the compilation of the figures. The results should then be published in a volume to be entitled the "Annual Statistics of Prisoners," the date being given for the various institutions, with the most numerous combinations, and to be accom-

panied by a carefully prepared explanatory text. It might be mentioned that the blanks to be used in this scheme are individual cards, and not lists. It is my pleasure to inform the Statistical Association that the plan there proposed was approved by the organization. Preparations are now being made to carry it into effect. It will be applied to the year 1890, and it is the hope of those who have the matter in charge that the participation in the effort will be general, thus securing from the beginning valuable results.

It is impossible to foretell which of these plans will be most successful. It is important to note that success means opportunities for study which have hitherto been closed to us. The success of either of these plans will be a step towards placing our country on a level with European nations in this respect. Important practical and theoretical problems hinge on the phenomena of crime, and we should have more adequate means of studying them.

ROLAND P. FALKNER.

PRICE STATISTICS.

The latest contribution to the subject of price statistics is an article by Soetbeer in Conrad's *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik*, Vol. xxi, No. 4, p. 412, entitled: "Veränderungen im Niveau der allgemeinen Warenpreise im den Jahren 1881-1889."

The author first reviews the several attempts which have been made to obtain reliable statistics concerning the fluctuation of prices in the last fifteen years. For this purpose, so-called index numbers have been used, or percentages of combined averages. Various objections have been raised against this method. It is arbitrary and incomplete, and therefore yields unreliable results. But its chief faults are that the number of articles taken into account is too limited, and that the marked difference in the quantitative economic importance of the goods is either entirely overlooked or reduced to an inappreciable unit.

Most of these deficiencies are avoided by another method to which Soetbeer calls attention, although a considerable margin of errors is still left. It is based on the government valuations of international exchanges, which are observed with increasing interest and exactitude.